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Teaching Oral Communication Skills via Authentic Material: A Description and Analysis of a Learning Experience in Japan

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TEACHING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS VIA AUTHENTIC MATERIAL: A Description and Analysis of a Learning Experience in Japan

by

Philip B. Graham

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ABSTRACT

This paper defines authentic material and describes how the language teacher can find or produce it. The author describes an approach to teaching oral communication skills in three demonstration lessons based on his experience teaching in Japan. The author then analyzes the learning process making the point that in this approach learners learn both language and process, communication skills and the process of learning communication skills. The author concludes by putting the paper in the perspective of its general applicability to teaching other aspects of language, such as writing skills, and the continuing professional interest in teaching and learning communicative competence.

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE 010

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Language Skills

RT Conversational Language Courses
Second Language Learning
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ENGLISH (SECOND LANGUAGE) 300

NT English for Special Purposes

RT Language Skills
Second Language Learning
Teaching Methods

TEACHING METHODS 510

NT Audiovisual Instruction
Classroom Techniques
Multimedia Instruction
Oral Communication Method

LEARNING 310

NT Multisensory Learning
Second Language Learning
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This project by Philip Bruce Graham is accepted in its present form.

Date_____ Principal Advisor Diane Larsen-Freeman

Project Advisor/Reader Michael Gerald

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TEACHING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

VIA AUTHENTIC MATERIAL:

A Description and Analysis of a

Learning Experience in Japan

Philip Bruce Graham

M.A.T. IX

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe an approach to teaching oral communication skills by means of authentic material, defined as "speech or language produced by native speakers for native speakers." I will discuss in detail authentic material and how to find it and then present three demonstration lessons based on my experience in Japan using this approach. I will conclude with a perspective on the general application of this approach to other aspects of language, such as writing skills, and its relevance to the continuing professional interest in teaching and learning communicative competence. This paper is offered as having practical value for language teachers with an interest in the Japanese language learner, using videotape recording equipment in the language classroom, and/or teaching oral communication skills.

AUTHENTIC MATERIAL AND HOW TO FIND IT

Authentic material is defined as speech or language produced by native speakers for native speakers. In traditional language learning authentic material in the form of tapes or tape transcripts, films, newspapers, letters and other documents, and literature, is frequently used at the intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency as a supplement to the main course of instruction. In the approach presented in this paper, however, authentic material is the source, the "text," of the language that learners attempt to assimilate.

The use of spoken material described in this paper is similar to the common practice of using a dialogue or conversation to present a a situational or grammatical usage, though quite different in that there is a different raison d'etre for authentic material and situational/grammatical dialogues. In the case of dialogues and conversations exemplifying situational or grammatical usage, the reason for being of these pieces of language is the teaching/learning of language. Frequently, such dialogues are altered from what a native speaker would actually say depending on the learners' level of proficiency or the teachers' need to cover a particular point of usage. Also, situational dialogues cover just one instance of what might be said in a particular situation, when, in reality, there are a myriad of possibilities of what a native speaker might (need to) communicate in any given situation. In contrast to this type of dialogue, authentic material exists in and of itself as communication between native speakers. Secondarily,

it can be used as a text in a language learning situation.

In this paper, we will focus on the teaching and learning of oral communication skills and the use of taped, and, in particular, videotaped material. At first glance, it would appear that the application of the approach advocated herein would be limited due to the limited availability of videotape recording and playback equipment in most institutions in which languages are learned. In fact, this in not so.

I consider the use of videotape equipment in learning oral communication skills to be both optimal and optional. The second best situation for the application of the approach I describe would be using a cassete or reel-to-reel recorder with prepared tapes, a more generally available alternative to videotape material and equipment. The third best mode of application would be using a written transcription of an authentic conversation between native speakers. The focus on videotaped material in this paper does not imply that effective learning of oral communication skills cannot take place without videotape; it does imply that the learning of oral communication skills through this approach can take place most effectively <u>with</u> videotaped material.

Oral communication does not consist merely of words spoken. It is also the range of nuance in meaning expressible through the parts and whole of the body. I believe learners can learn oral communication best if they

can see native speakers communicating. For this reason, I feel that the use of authentic material in conjunction with videotape equipment is optimal for learning oral communication skills in a classroom.

Using authentic taped material in conjunction with recording equipment requires some technical understanding and knowledge from the outset. First, teachers must accept the machines used in the classroom for what they are, namely, extensions of our hands and minds that help us do something we could not ordinarily do, that is, bring native speakers into our classrooms with their authentic language. Having accepted the potential usefulness of machines, teachers must then learn how to use them. Learning to use videotape equipment, especially the new cassette models, is quite easy, a half-hour task at most. Learning to use a camera with videotape equipment is a little more complicated, but certainly not as difficult as learning to drive a car. Having accepted the machine and mastered it, the next step is finding appropriate material for use in the classroom.

In looking for material for potential use in the classroom there are several sources that teachers might investigate. These sources include educational and commercial audiovisual catalogues, library tape and film collections, as well as recorded material available at the teachers' own institution. Another option,

should none of these sources prove fruitful, is teachers producing tapes of their own. If a current topic of conversation is candidates running for a presidential nomination, for example, the teacher might try to capture on tape an unrehearsed conversation between two or more native speakers discussing the pros and cons of politicians running for office. The operative words for gathering authentic material are candid and natural. In my experience, the material a teacher-produced tape contains is more important than whether the tape is professionally done or "homemade." For this reason, when I have been unable to obtain appropriate material from professional sources, I have not hesitated to take a cassette recorder into "the street" or the after-dinner conversation to gather candid and natural communicative interaction among native speakers. Usually, the immediacy and relevance of the material more than compensates for any technical deficiencies as compared to professionally produced tapes.

The main criterion in looking for and selecting authentic material for potential use in the classroom should be relevance to the learners' communicative needs. For a class of university students, for instance, material containing examples of native communication in social, academic and official situations in a university environment would be most appropriate. In the demonstration lessons described below, originating from my personal experience teaching classes of Japanese businessmen, the authentic material I used was a professionally made videotape film of a soap opera set in a business situation. I feel

that I was fortunate to have easy access both to videotape equipment and material with a wealth of interaction relevant to the communicative needs of the businessmen in my classes.

DEMONSTRATION LESSONS: INTRODUCTION

The following discussion is based on my personal experience teaching Japanese businessmen at the Language Institute of Japan (LIOJ) in Odawara. The businessmen's program at LIOJ consisted of 19 hours of class per week for four weeks and was complemented by a general English program of equal length. The students in the businessmen's program ranged in proficiency level from low-intermediate to advanced.

I used a multimedia set of material, The Bellcrest Story, produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Oxford University Press (1973), to teach business English at LIOJ. The Bellcrest Story consists of a movie of thirteen episodes of approximately 12-15 minutes each (also available in videotape cassette), cassette tapes of the soundtrack and drills, a tape companion book with transcriptions of the soundtrack and drills, a textbook, English for Business, containing summaries of the episodes, drills, exercises and roleplays, and a book of business-related documents called The Bellcrest File. The students in my classes normally used English for Business and The Bellcrest File but not the tape companion book.

The most valuable part of The Bellcrest Story in my opinion is the film itself, which in these demonstration lessons is the medium through which the learners were exposed to authentic utterances

in context. The speech of the film is "authentic" in that the characters of the story are portrayed by professional actors who interact in a native style at native speed. This well-written story has a large amount of entertainment value and is comparable to other British serials which appear on public television in the United States.

By way of introduction to The Bellcrest Story, each episode depicts a chapter in the story of Bellcrest, Ltd., a fictitious British company which manufactures electronic components. The story has a "hero," the marketing manager of the company, who is responsible for the planning and development of a new product, the SC1, an AC speed control for use in electric vehicles, with which he hopes Bellcrest can expand and diversify. In the course of the story, the marketing manager faces a great many problems, including having to convince the other members of the Bellcrest management that the SC1 is the best product for their expansion effort, the uncertainty or unwillingness of Bellcrest's bank financing the development project, fierce competition from a rival company, and a fire that destroys a large part of the Bellcrest factory. In short, The Bellcrest Story is a business adventure show, a soap opera set in a business situation.

In starting a four-week course--given the fact that I had ready-made authentic material, albeit in a dialect other than my own--the first step was determining the communicative needs of the learners and setting objectives for the course. The first class session with new

students was devoted to an objective setting exercise. I broke up the students in my classes into small groups with two or three learners per group. I asked each group to produce a list of common objectives for the class by considering what they as individuals would like to be able to do in/with English at the end of the program. After completing their small-group lists of objectives, the groups then came together to compile a list of class objectives. This exercise resulted in a conscious consideration on the learners' part of what their learning goals should be and gave them an instrument with which they could evaluate their learning during and at the end of the program. The learners' objectives were usually something along the lines of wanting to be able to plan, discuss, negotiate and reach a decision using English, these goals reflecting their consideration of how they would be using their English skills after completing the program.

With the learners' objectives in mind, the course content was taken largely, though not exclusively, from what is contained in The Bellcrest Story. The speech behavior represented in The Bellcrest Story which corresponded to the learners' objectives included asking for and giving opinions, making suggestions, making a point, discussing pros and cons, persuading, agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting an alternative, speaking hypothetically, as well as interactions such as introductions, leave takings and others.

Following the objective-setting exercise, the learners and I were prepared to plunge into the activities described in the demonstration lessons. In describing these lessons I will present them in the same order and manner in which they were presented in class. For the benefit of the readers' understanding, I will summarize the scene from The Bellcrest Story that was the core of each lesson in outline form. Next I will expose the readers to what the learners initially heard and saw on videotape and then describe the activities that occurred in each stage of the teaching/learning process.

The process of teaching and learning oral communication skills via authentic material that evolved in my classes had four stages. I call these stages the Exposure Stage, the Practice Stage, the Use Stage and the Evaluation Stage, respectively. In the Exposure Stage, the learners were exposed to the authentic material; in the Practice Stage, they practiced specific speech acts they had been exposed to; in the Use stage, they had an opportunity to use what they had practiced; and, in the Evaluation Stage, the learners and teacher had a chance to evaluate the learning that had taken place in the lesson.

For the purposes of this paper I have termed a complete cycle of the teaching/learning process, from the initial Exposure Stage through the Evaluation Stage, a "lesson." Each lesson that I describe took from six to fifteen classroom hours to complete the four stages. These lessons took place in the context of an intensive, immersion

language program of four weeks in which the businessmen learners spent eight and a half hours a day in class, four of which comprised the time period in which the lesson activities occurred. In addition to the time spent in the classroom, the learners ate meals and participated in extracurricular activities with the teachers. At these occasions, the learners were encouraged and expected to communicate in English.

DEMONSTRATION LESSON I

Exposure Stage

I played the following scene as an immediate follow-up to the objective-setting exercise in my business English classes, that is, in the third class hour of the first day of classes. Even though this scene is not the first scene in the film, it served as a good introduction to the characters and story of the film as well as the approach to learning oral communication skills that the learners and I would be engaged in for the next four weeks. Appropriately, the main speech event in this scene is introductions among the three participants in the scene. Saying little in the way of introduction myself, I played the following scene on a videotape recorder equipped with a television monitor for viewing.

The Bellcrest Story, Episode 1, Scene 3

Participants: Paul Malone, Bellcrest's Marketing manager; Maurice Downes, Bellcrest's Managing Director; George Hanson, a visiting journalist.

Setting: In Bellcrest's reception area. Malone and Downes have just bumped into each other. Downes is on his way out, Malone is on his way to meet George Hanson.

Topic: Introductions, small talk, leave taking.

Style: Formal--Informal.

The Bellcrest Story, Episode 1, Scene 3

Downes: Good morning, Paul. I'm just off to London.

Malone: Oh—Maurice! I've got a visitor I think you'd like to meet. A journalist. He's going to write something about Bellcrest.

Downes: Oh, all right. I'll say hello to him. But I've only got a moment. I don't want to miss my train.

Malone: Mr. Hanson, isn't it?

Hanson: Yes, that's right. George Hanson.

Malone: How do you do? I'm Paul Malone.

Hanson: How do you do, Mr. Malone.

Malone: Would you like to meet our Managing Director?

Hanson: Ah—thank you!

Malone: Maurice, let me introduce you to Mr. Hanson. Mr. Hanson, Mr. Downes.

Hanson: How do you do?

Downes: How do you do. Mr. Malone tells me that you're going to write an article about Bellcrest.

Hanson: Yes. I'm writing a series of articles on electronics firms in Europe.

Downes: Well, I'm sure Mr. Malone will give you all the help he can. I'm sorry I can't spend any time with you. This is one of my busy days. I have to go to London.

Hanson: That's a pity. Perhaps we'll have a chance to talk if I come down again.

Downes: Yes. I look forward to that. Well, if you'll excuse me, I must be on my way. I'll leave you with Mr. Malone.

Hanson: Goddbye, Mr. Downes.

Downes: Goodbye....

After playing the scene without stopping, I switched off the machine and asked the learners to describe what they had seen. With class sizes ranging from five to ten students, all of the learners had an opportunity to contribute to the general class understanding of the scene. The scene itself was self-explanatory in that the learners could readily see that two of the participants knew each other, that one of them introduced himself to a man who had been waiting and then introduced that man to the other man, and that the "other" subsequently leaves. The details, however, of who these men are, what their relationship was to each other, and what they said to each other in doing what they did in the scene were usually not comprehensible to the learners after the initial viewing/hearing of the scene.

Inspiring the learners to want to comprehend the details of the scene was not a problem for me since the learners' purpose for being in my class was to become able to understand and converse with native speakers of English in a business context. The learners expressed their understanding and acceptance of this purpose usually in informal situations outside the classroom. As a result of the motivation present in the learners, we came to a mutual agreement, with hardly a direct word having been said on the subject, that our joint task in what I have called the Exposure Stage was for the learners to come to as complete an understanding of what they had seen and heard as possible.

At this point in the Exposure Stage, having played the scene through

once and the learners having described what they had seen and heard, I, as the teacher-helper, approached the task of the learners attaining complete understanding by determining how much information the learners had obtained from the initial viewing of the scene. I accomplished this by asking information questions related to the scene. Following the introductory scene above, I usually began by asking the learners if they had "caught" any of the names of the participants. Usually, almost all of the learners, regardless of proficiency level, heard the name Hanson and could correctly identify the person in the scene to whom it belonged. My next question was, "What's his first name?" Only a few of the learners in my classes had heard the George. When asked about the other two participants in the scene, about half the learners had heard and understood Paul and Downes and could identify the characters whose names they were. Invariably, however, very few learners had caught the other halves of the two names, Malone and Maurice.

The purpose of asking information questions such as these was twofold. First, by asking this type of question, both the learners and I became aware of how much of the "subject matter" the learners had received successfully through the first viewing. The result of this exercise was mental tallying by both the learners and myself of what the learners had heard and understood and what they had not. Secondly, by considering which names the learners had understood and which they had not, we were establishing a need to know what the learners had missed the first time through the scene. Sometimes the learners and I went

through this process on the chalkboard as I asked the information questions. I wrote the information that had been understood and left blank spaces for the information that the learners still needed. The result on the chalkboard of my asking the learners questions about the names of the people they had observed on the film was:

Paul _____ George Hanson _____ Downes.

Having established the knowns and unknowns, I then replayed the part of the scene containing the names, the introductions. In my experience the learners' concentration on what the characters were saying in the film increased dramatically after going through the process of taking stock of what they had and had not understood after the first viewing of the film. As a result, the learners were frequently able to fill in the blank spaces, the unknowns, after seeing and listening to the film a second time. This increased concentration and consequent understanding I attribute directly to our having established a need to know and understand what the learners had missed the first time around.

If the learners were not able to fill in the blank spaces after the second playing, I repeated the line(s) containing the unknowns until they could. I do not mean to imply that repetition causes understanding. In the case we have been talking about, in which the unknowns were names, the problem of "understanding" for Japanese learners was one of distinguishing unfamiliar sound combinations. In the sense that the more language learners hear unfamiliar combinations of sounds

the better they will become able to distinguish those combinations of sounds when they hear them again, repetition helped the learners in my classes fill in the blank spaces.

When we worked through the process of filling in the blanks with the names, it probably took less time than it does to read about it. After this, I continued asking information questions based on the scene. Some of these were: "What time of the day is it?" ("How do you know?"), "Where is Maurice Downes going?", "What does George Hanson do (for a living)?", "What does Maurice Downes do?", "Why is George Hanson visiting Bellcrest?" If the learners could respond correctly to the question, we moved on to the next question; if not, we returned to the videotape for an answer. With advanced learners the information-question phase went relatively quickly; with less advanced learners I began by asking yes-no questions and then progressing to wh-questions resulting in us spending more time on this exercise.

During the course of the information-question exercise I frequently asked questions having no explicit answer present in the scene. For example, I regularly asked the learners in my classes what position they thought Paul Malone had in Bellcrest's management structure and why they thought Maurice Downes was going to London on business. The purpose of such questions was not to trick the learners or even to force them to look for something that was not in the scene. Rather I asked this type of question to develop the learners' ability to make infer-

ences and to give them an opportunity to bring their own experience and knowledge into the classroom and apply it to the task at hand. I rarely told the learners if their inferences were correct or incorrect since the information would be provided in future scenes of The Bellcrest Story. I noticed that the learners' interest in the film as a story grew if they could look forward to learning the answer to a "mystery."

Through asking and answering information questions and reviewing the scene piecemeal, the learners achieved a good general understanding of the scene. The next step in the Exposure Stage was to attain a more complete understanding of the speech in the scene by working through it line by line. This process took the form of my playing a line or part of a line and then stopping the machine with the Stop or Pause control. I then asked the learners for a word-for-word repetition of what they had just heard. If one learner could repeat the line exactly, I reversed the tape, played the line again, and asked another learner to repeat the line. If the second leaner I asked could also repeat the line exactly and the other learners appeared as if they were following the conversation, I moved on to the next line.

The purpose of having the learners attempt to repeat exactly what they heard was not repetition for its own sake, but, rather, a focus on the specific form that the meaningful communication they were observing took. If the learners could repeat a line or part of a line word for word, I then asked for an explanation of the line's function and/or

meaning. Even if the learners did not understand the exact words, I asked them to describe the function and/or meaning of what they had seen and heard, and frequently they could. I then returned the focus to the form by asking the learners to guess at the form, that is, the exact words, working from their knowledge of the function or meaning of the line. When an individual learner understood the form of the utterance but had not a clue to the function or meaning, I then suggested that he seek assistance from his peers. It then became a group concern to figure out and verbalize the function and meaning of the form. I was available as a machine operator, consultant and final arbiter, but encouraged the learners to do the work of figuring out and verbalizing using their own resources.

If none of the learners could repeat the line or part of a line exactly after it was played, we, that is, the learners and I, tried to build a composite picture of the line by putting together what one learner had heard correctly with what another learner had heard correctly. Frequently, we were able to construct the whole line from the bits and pieces that the individual learners had heard correctly. The realization that their group comprehension was greater than any individual's comprehension bore fruit later when they had to tackle the job of understanding what characters had said in a scene without me acting as an informant. If, however, the learners as a group were unable to decipher what the character on the film had said, perhaps missing just one or two

words, we followed the same procedure described above when discussing how the learners came to understand the names of the characters in the scene.

The first step in this procedure involved taking stock of what the learners had understood by writing the sentence or phrase on the chalkboard and leaving blank spaces for the word or words they had not understood. After I had acted as the elicitor and scribe of the "knowns" a few times, I then asked individual learners to take turns coming to the chalkboard with other difficult sentences and phrases to go through the same procedure of asking the other learners what they had heard and transcribing the responses on the board. With the sentences containing blank spaces in front of them on the board, I then encouraged the learners to guess at what words could fill the blank spaces. We then returned to the videotape and listened to the portion containing the unknown word or words. At this point, if the learners could not fill in the blank spaces on their own, I did it. Whether they could or not, we next reviewed the line under consideration with the learners having the opportunity to ask questions. My response to questions was to throw them back to the learners as a group so that they would seek information from and depend on each other rather than relying on me, as the "teacher," to spoonfeed them. When there was a need for me to provide information, however, I did so, but only as a last resort.

The questions I asked in this phase of the Exposure Stage, in

contrast to the earlier information questions, were designed to focus the learners' attention on the function and meaning of the language used in the scene. These questions were a recapitulation and continuation of the learners' attempts to express the function and meaning of what they had heard and seen. I set up the questions by first (re)playing a piece of the scene, occasionally with the sound turned down so that the learners could see what the characters were doing but not hear what they were saying, next freezing the picture on one frame of the film and then asking, for example, "What's Paul Malone doing?", producing a response, "He's introducing George Hanson to Maurice Downes." Then I replayed the same piece of the scene and asked, "What's Paul Malone saying (his exact words)?", producing a response, "He's saying, 'Maurice, let me introduce you to Mr. Hanson, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Downes.'"

The purpose of this set of questions was to produce an inference for learning language in the learners' minds along these lines: "Paul Malone said ..., he (did) ...; therefore, one says... to do ...; or, one says... when one does....". I usually let the learners draw their own conclusion rather than saying "This is the conclusion you should draw," knowing that they would have an opportunity to follow the same line of reasoning in more compelling circumstances in the Practice Stage.

In the case of an expression like, "that's a pity," uttered by George Hanson in the scene, a case in which the learners could understand

the sounds of the phrase but not what the word pity meant or what the phrase as a whole meant, we approached the problem of understanding contextually. I played the preceding and following lines having asked the learners to listen carefully to the tone of Hanson's voice as he said "That's a pity." Intuitively, the learners were able to understand that the tone of Hanson's voice expressed regret plus understanding and acknowledgement, thus coming to an understanding of the communicative function and meaning of the phrase "That's a pity."

In this manner, following these basic steps, we moved through the scene line by line until we completed it. Once the learners became accustomed to this process, we were able to go through a scene like the one in this lesson in about one class hour, that is, approximately fifty minutes of concentrated effort. The learners not only became familiar with the approach but also found that their ability to listen to and understand native speakers steadily improved throughout the four-week program. At LIOJ we gave the Michigan Test of Aural Comprehension at the beginning and end of each businessmen's program. The average increase in the scores of intermediate learners in my classes was eight points. Advanced learners tended to show a lower rate of improvement in test scores. To the extent that standardized tests can ever measure a language learner's ability to communicate, the increase in scores seemed to indicate that the learners' ability to comprehend spoken English increased significantly during the four-week term. This

improvement was a reflection, I believe, of both the total learning environment at LIOJ and the activities the learners experienced in the Exposure Stage, activities having the express purpose of improving the learners' ability to understand oral communication between native speakers.

The Practice Stage

The activities in the Practice Stage of this lesson focused on two interactions illustrated in the scene, introducing oneself or a third person to someone and excusing oneself when leaving, that is, taking leave. The point of departure for practicing these interactions was the language that Malone, Hanson and Downes used in the scene. As described above, the learners had observed what Malone had said when he first introduced himself to Hanson and then introduced Hanson to Downes. In setting up the practice in the Practice Stage, we first reviewed exactly what Malone said in these two situations. If necessary, I replayed the relevant portion of the videotape to refresh the learners' memories. We then discussed introductions in general, the different situations in which they occur. I asked the learners to share other ways they knew of making introductions, usually receiving responses like, "Mr. _____, I'd like to introduce Mr. _____." This exercise was useful because it brought what the learners knew into the classroom in an <u>active</u> way and provided an opportunity to correct the popular misconception among Japanese learners that they could use direct translations of Japan-

ese conversational formulas in interactions with non-Japanese in English. The standard Japanese-English formula for self-introduction, translated directly from Japanese, is "I am Nakamura (last name)."

From this point, we started practicing self- and third-person introductions with the learners in pairs and threes . I modeled the situation for this practice directly on the situation in the film. In a group of three learners, two would pretend that they worked for the same company and the other would be an expected visitor. Using their own names, one learner came up to the seated "visitor" and said, "Mr. _____, my name is Full name," followed by an exchange of "How do you do's." The first learner then took the visitor and introduced him to the third learner using the formula, "First name (of his colleague), let me (or, "I'd like to...") introduce you to Mr. _____." "Mr. _____, Mr. _____. The exercise resulted in the learners getting good practice in appropriate introductory formulas and some cultural insight into the use of first names in western culture, a less formal and rigid usage than in Japanese society.

We also practiced a self-introductory situation that the learners had not observed in the videotape, namely, introducing oneself to a stranger in a public setting. This practice grew out of our discussion of the different situations in which introductions occur and my foreknowledge of the learners' communicative needs in the situation they would be involved in in the upcoming Use Stage. The formula I taught

the learners for introducing oneself to a stranger was "Excuse me, may I introduce myself? My name is...." The learners practiced this formula by milling around in an open space in the classroom and introducing themselves to each other. Other teachers who had covered some of the same ground brought their learners into our class for a more realistic simulation of strangers meeting. One gratifying aspect of this exercise was that the more reticent, less verbal, learners, after being introduced several times, did plunge in and start introducing themselves to others, perhaps as a result of the feeling that they should do what the rest of the group was doing, an example of a major social force in Japanese culture in action. In general, the other teachers and I participated passively in these activities, that is, letting the learners introduce themselves and others to us, but not actually performing introductions ourselves unless a role model was direly needed. The overall result of practicing these situations was excellent preparation for an event the learners would participate in during the evening of their first day of classes.

During the practice of introductions, I encouraged the learners to allow the conversation to flow naturally after the introduction rather than practicing the introductory formulas and then stopping abruptly and unnaturally. This allowed the learners to gain basic information about each other and also led naturally into the next interaction we were going to practice, excusing oneself, or, taking leave.

The learners' practice of leave taking was again modeled on what they had seen on the videotape, Maurice Downes saying "Well, if you'll excuse me, I must be on my way," to George Hanson as he was about to leave Bellcrest for London. The learners practiced this formula, and variations after "...must/have to...", by repeating it in unison several times and then repeating it individually for my evaluation. I then urged the learners to recall when and how Maurice Downes had said the phrase and apply it to their own needs. We discussed this briefly and the learners realized that they needed a phrase like this to disengage themselves naturally from conversations emanating from introductions that then peter out. Having practiced the leave-taking formula, the learners were then able to continue their small-talk conversations with each other and exit gracefully when the need arose.

To summarize the Practice Stage, the learners' practice was based on speech acts contained in the scene studied in the Exposure Stage. The learners practiced making self- and third-person introductions and excusing themselves by first repeating formulas in chorus, then repeating orally on an individual basis, and then using the formulas in short conversational situations in groups of two or three learners. The purpose of the practice in the Practice Stage was to prepare the learners for communication in the Use Stage.

The Use Stage

The communication activity the learners participated in in what I call the Use Stage of the teaching/learning process was actually a social event at LIOJ, the welcoming cocktail party after the first day and evening of classes. This monthly party served a dual cross-cultural purpose in that it was, in fact, a welcoming ceremony for the students, and therefore in tune with Japanese culture, but in a form quite alien to Japanese culture, the western-style cocktail party.

Having observed the learners in my class introduce themselves, be introduced, make small talk, and excuse themselves, I had no doubts that they would acquit themselves admirably at the cocktail party. My main concern was how they would perceive themselves as communicators communicating in a foreign language in a foreign environment, which is essentially what LIOJ was; an island of western culture in the "sea" of Japan. Before the cocktail party, I suggested that the learners try to introduce themselves to two westerners whom they had not yet met, make small talk and then excuse themselves. With a staff of seventeen western teachers, it was highly probable that the learners had not met everyone and that, therefore, the communication situation would be "real." I also advised the learners to observe themselves and their interlocutors as communicators and to pay special attention to how the person(s) they talked to reacted to them as English speakers. Their assignment was to report back to me and the other learners on their experiences as communi-

cators at the cocktail party.

At the party itself I kept an ear cocked and an eye peeled to observe the learners at work. I tried to do the observing as naturally an inconspicuously as possible so that I would not interfere in any way with the natural communication process. My classes averaged from five to ten learners, so I had little trouble observing all the learners in the course of the two-hour cocktail party. The information I gained by observing the learners at the party helped me coordinate the Evaluation Stage activity in class the next day.

The Evaluation Stage

The evaluation of the learning in the first cycle of the learning process took place in the context of a class discussion on the second day of classes. As a review of the learning process, I asked the learners to describe step by step exactly what they had experienced in class the previous day. I then asked them individually to give a brief account of the communication exercise they undertook at the cocktail party and their impressions of their performances as communicators in English. We concluded with a general discussion in which the learners evaluated their learning in terms of what they had done in class, how it affected their communication at the cocktail party, and the potential, long-term

value of what they had learned. Most learners felt that the intensive listening in the Exposure Stage followed by the practice in the Practice Stage helped them considerably in communicating at the cocktail party. The comments that the learners made at this time led me to believe that the work we did in class helped them in both cognitive and affective ways. The learners believed that they had both a greater linguistic command of the formulas they had observed and practiced as well as a greater confidence in their ability to use those formulas. The learners could begin to see the direct line from observing native speakers communicating to practicing what they had observed to attempting to use what they had observed and practiced. Although the learners had freedom to ask questions at any point in the learning process, and exercised that freedom, I especially encouraged questions at this point in the Evaluation Stage. The learners most often queried why we had done something in a particular way in the Exposure or Practice Stages. Responding to this kind of question led all of us to review again what we had done in each stage of the learning cycle and this, in turn, led to a conscious realization of the relationship between The Bellcrest Story and the learning of oral communication skills that had taken place in our class. As a result of evaluating their learning in this manner the learners looked forward with enthusiasm to the next scene from The Bellcrest Story.

DEMONSTRATION LESSON II

The Exposure Stage

The second demonstration lesson began on the third or fourth day of classes in the businessmen's program at LIOJ. After completing the stages described in the first demonstration lesson, the learners and I next went back to the beginning of Episode 1 and worked through the first two scenes of the episode in a similar fashion to that described above. As a result of this work, the learners gained a deeper understanding of the management structure of Bellcrest, Ltd. and the personalities of the characters in the story. Scene 4 of the first episode, the scene presented in the Exposure Stage of the second demonstration lesson, immediately follows the scene we saw in the first demonstration lesson. Before playing this scene for the learners, I reversed the videotape to the beginning of Episode 1 and played the whole episode without stopping to the end of scene 4.

The Bellcrest Story, Episode 1, Scene 4

Participants: Paul Malone and George Hanson.

Setting: A pub near the Bellcrest plant over lunch.

Topic: Bellcrest's recovery over the past five years, different views on whether Bellcrest is in a position to expand or diversify.

Style: Informal.

The Bellcrest Story, Episode 1, Scene 4

Hanson: ...Were you with Bellcrest five years ago?

Malone: No, Maurice Downes appointed me. He didn't get on too well with my predecessor, Donald Williams. You see, Bellcrest would never have recovered if Downes hadn't cut out some of its more ambitious development projects. Donald Williams wasn't at all happy to see some of his favorite schemes abandoned. So he had to go.

Hanson: And you were brought in to help Mr. Downes--so you must take some of the credit for Bellcrest's recovery and for its strong position now.

Malone: Thank you. But it doesn't stop there. As Marketing Manager it's my job to see that we move into new fields and diversify.

Hanson: Ah! New products for new customers.

Malone: That's right.

Hanson: Do you think Bellcrest is ready for diversification?

Malone: I do, certainly. As you say, we're in a strong position, we should use it.

Hanson: Does Mr. Downes agree?

Malone: Well--he sees things differently....

After playing Episode 1 to the end of this scene, I went through the process of asking the learners to describe what they had just seen in order to determine their general comprehension of the scene. I then divided the learners into two groups--three groups in classes of nine or more--and supplied each group with a cassette recorder and cassette tape of the soundtrack of Scene 4. I assigned each group the task of transcribing Scene 4 completely and left them to work out the details of how they would accomplish the task. Usually one member of each group

took responsibility for organizing the group into a working unit. The most common arrangement involved one member operating the recorder and the other members gathered around with one of them acting as "scribe."

This exercise proved very fruitful in terms of communication and positive group dynamics. As members of a group-conscious, task-oriented society the learners reponded efficiently to the task of trying to understand what Paul Malone and George Hanson were saying, and effectively helped each other reach a collective comprehension. If one member of the group did not understand a word or phrase, another member usually would, and, if not, the whole group leaned forward in their seats and listened intently as the recorder operator repeated the recalcitrant word or phrase. For the sake of a more complete understanding, I permitted limited translation of difficult words and phrases in the context of small group activities like this in my classroom. I found that the benefits of increased understanding were more important for the learning process than adherence to the traditional strictures against allowing learners' language(s) in the classroom. The learners themselves controlled the amount of Japanese used in their groups without my having to say anything about it to them. In fact, I hardly participated in the learners' groups at all other than to respond to requests for help.

When the learners had completed their transcripts of the scene,

they reconvened as a whole class to begin collating their two transcripts into one. In this phase, one learner wrote the conversation between Malone and Hanson on a large piece of paper on an easel board using magic marker as the learners hashed out the differences in the two group transcriptions. If the members of the two groups disagreed on a word or phrase, they replayed a cassette tape to try to resolve the difference. If they could not resolve the difference in opinion, the scribe wrote both versions on the whole class transcription. When finished, the learners had produced a larger version of their small-group transcripts, what Malone and Hanson said as far as the learners understood it with what they did not understand indicated by underlined blank spaces on the paper.

At this point I stepped back into the picture having remained on the sidelines since the class broke into small groups and proceeded to underline any errors on the learners' transcript with a different color magic marker. I did not tell the learners what the error was or how to correct it. I only indicated that there was an error of some kind. We then returned to the videotape and worked through the scene line by line focusing on the errors and the unknowns in much the same manner as described on pages 20-22 above. With special vocabulary such as predecessor and diversify, which the learners almost always had not understood, I emphasized guessing from contextual clues at the meaning. I directed their guessing with questions and virtually com-

pelled the learners to guess rather than telling them what unknown words meant. If the learners absolutely could not comprehend a word's meaning, I first referred them to a dictionary and then, if necessary, explained the word's use. Here again translation sometimes played a useful role; if one or more learners understood a difficult word, they could then explain it, first in English, then in Japanese, to those who did not. With characteristically British phrases such as, "get on with someone," after examining its usage socratically with the learners, I first asked the learners if they knew the parallel American expression, and then, if noone knew, explained it to them.

As in the first demonstration lesson, the questions I asked the learners in this phase and the questions they asked me dealt with the interrelationship of the form, function and meaning of the utterances in the scene. The learners had a hard time understanding Malone's past unreal statement, "Bellcrest never would have recovered if Downes hadn't cut out some of its more ambitious development projects," for example, not because they had never studied past unreal conditional sentences, but because they were unaccustomed to experiencing the past unreal form in actual communication. I approached the problem of the learners not understanding the function and meaning of Malone's statement contextually. I first established that Bellcrest <u>did</u> recover through Hamson's "...Bellcrest's recovery and strong position now..." and then that Downes <u>did</u> cut out some projects through Malone commenting on Donald Williams' favorite schemes being "abandoned."

I then asked the learners to analyze and describe the immediate context of the statement. They could see that Malone was describing his relationship with Bellcrest, how he got the job because his predecessor could not accept cuts in development. By uttering the negative past unreal statement in this context then, Malone was justifying Downes' policy and his own position as Bellcrest's current marketing manager as well as commenting on Bellcrest's recovery. This was the understanding the learners came to by examining the context of "Bellcrest would never have recovered if Downes hadn't cut out some of its more ambitious development projects."

Another example of the deeper levels of comprehension plumbed in this phase was our focus on Malone's assertive "I do" in response to Hanson's "Do you think Bellcrest is ready for diversification?" The learners were intuitively able to explain, after I had asked them why they thought Malone had intoned the "I" in that way, that Malone's intonation implied that someone else did not think Bellcrest was ready for diversification. Looking then at Hanson's next question and Malone's response, the learners understood how Hanson took his cue for "Does Mr. Downes agree?" from Malone's intonation of "I do...." In this way the learners began to understand the natural flow and wholeness of the communication they had been observing on the videotape.

The two examples cited represent a fraction of the total activity in this phase, which followed basically the same procedure as described

on page 21 above. The focus on the function and meaning of the forms of the scene's utterances was a natural prelude to the activities of the Practice Stage.

The Practice Stage

I started the practice by directing the learners' attention to two useful phrases that occurred in the scene. The first was the opening line of the scene, "Were you with Bellcrest five years ago?" I explained that the pattern "be with _someone/-thing_" has several meanings in modern English, but that in a business context like the one in the scene means "work for...." The learners practiced asking each other "Who are you with?", after an initial modeling by me, followed by "Were you with _____ no. years ago?" When asked this question, the learners responded with either "Yes, I've been with _____ since _____," or, "No, I've only been with _____ since _____."
The second phrase we practiced was taken from Malone's "As Marketing Manager it's my job to see that we move into new fields and diversify." I asked each of the learners to define his own job using the pattern "As _____ it's my job to (see that...)..." while the rest of us listened and then asked for clarification if we had not understood.

In the next phase of practice the learners practiced agreeing with a factual statement using "That's right.", based on Malone's response

to Hanson's surmise in the scene, in conjunction with one of the drills from the Bellcrest Series textbook, English for Business. In this drill the learners practice responding to an inaccurate statement or presuming question with the expression, "No, actually...." Thus, for example, if the actual day was Tuesday, and a learner was approached with, "Today's Wednesday, isn't it?", he responded, "No, actually it isn't. It's Tuesday," or, "No, actually it's Tuesday." After working through a round of questions and responses like these, the learners continued practicing these formulas with statements or presuming questions dealing with topics of common knowledge. These statements or questions required a response affirming or denying their accuracy. For example, if A said, "Paul Malone is Marketing Manager, isn't he?", then B responded, agreeing with the accuracy of A's presumption, with the appropriate, "Yes, that's right." An inaccurate initial statement or presumption produced a response beginning, "No, actually...."

The speech acts of asking for and giving an opinion were among the learning objectives set by the class, so we spent time practicing these skills at this point. First, the learners practiced the simple pattern observed in the scene, "Do you think _something_ is true?", generating reponses of "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't." The learners asking the question filled in the blanks with their own ideas. From here we moved to a general opinion question and response sequence: A: "What do you think about _____?", B: "I think...." Again,

the learners filled in the blank spaces with their own thoughts. I acted as an editor in this activity making sure that the learners' thoughts were expressed correctly and intelligibly.

Combining the aspect of advisability with the opinion phrases just practiced, the learners then asked questions with "Do you think we should....?" The we in this exercise referred to the collective learners and originated in an examination of Malone's response to Hanson in the scene, "...we're in a strong position, we should use it." The learners asked each other questions like, "Do you think we should ask Phil about...?", and "Do you think we should study more vocabulary?" After that we moved to the wh-question, "What do you think we should do about....?"

Building on the foregoing, the next exercise gave the learners a chance to practice expressing result with so, based on Hanson's "...so you must take some of the credit...," as well as honing their interpretive and conversational skills. In this exercise, one person of a pair began with a suggestion-opinion in the form, "You know, I think we should...." Then the second person responded, "Ah. So you think we should(n't)...." The first person's rejoinder then depended upon the accuracy of B's interpretation of A's initial suggestion. If B's interpretation was accurate, A said, "Yes, that's right." If B's interpretation was inaccurate, then A had occasion to use, "No, actually....".

The point of this exercise was not just to practice certain patterns but also to foster intensive listening in a conversational setting. B had to listen to A's initial suggestion-opinion carefully to be able to interpret the ramifications of that statement correctly. A, in turn, was obliged to listen carefully to B's interpretation in order to respond appropriately.

In these exercises the learners were able to work effectively either in pairs or threes or in a whole class group. After modeling the formulas, I left the learners to their own devices with ear cocked for discordant combinations of English words. If a learner made a mistake, the other learners and I helped him correct it. In general, however, I tried to stay as far removed from the learners' consciousness as possible so as not to impede the simulation of real communication. I emphasized real communication in these exercises and encouraged the learners to try to say what they really thought or felt or wanted to say, to apply what they were learning to their immediate communication needs. In my experience, exchanges such as the following, in which two friends discussed a proposed shopping trip, were not uncommon: A: You know, I think we should go downtown tomorrow." B: "Ah. So you think we shouldn't go today." A; "Yes, that's right. We should wait until tomorrow." The point is not that these two intermediate level language learners had attained a native level of expression--they had not--but that they adapted speech behavior they had observed in native speakers

to their own communication needs. The fact that this adaptation and communication were able to occur in the classroom is indicative of how authentic material can be used effectively to teach oral communication skills.

The Use Stage

I will describe two exercises I used in this stage to follow the practice described above. I chose these exercises because they both provided contexts in which the learners could use the formulas they had practiced.

In the first exercise I asked one of the learners to be an expert in a field such as international relations, politics, economics or some field related to his job. Then, the other learners took the roles of journalists interviewing the expert (a la George Hanson). I gave the learners time to think about what they would say in the interview but asked them not to prepare scripts for themselves. I suggested that they jot notes of their ideas for questions and responses they might be able to use in the interview. I did not direct the learners to use particular formulas as in the Practice Stage; rather, I let the learners communicate naturally using the language they had at their command. Just before the beginning of the exercise I told the learners that they could spend only a limited amount of time in the interview, usually ten or fifteen

minutes, and that it was the expert's responsibility to end the interview at the end of the allotted time. I did this for two reasons; I knew that the leareners would keep the interaction moving at a good pace if they had a time limit, and I wanted to give the interviewee an opportunity to excuse himself and take his leave as we had practiced previously. The idea behind this exercise was to give the learners a chance to use what they had observed and practiced in the Exposure and Practice Stages and whatever else they could call up to meet their communicative needs in the interview situation. After using this roleplay situation in several forms with different classes, I ceased being surprised that the learners did actually use some of the formulas they had practiced. An advantage of the interview situation was that, after one learner had taken the role of expert and been interviewed by the other learners, the same situation could be re-enacted immediately after the first interview, the next day, or a week later with a different learner taking the role of the expert. I found that this exercise worked effectively with any level learners though lower level classes needed more time for preparation.

The other exercise I used in this stage was an assignment to discuss something and make a group decision. I divided the class into groups of three or four learners and assigned each group the task of planning a class party. The learners were to take into consideration as many details

of the party as they could, including who would be at the party, where the party would be held, when, how, etc. Each group had to develop a proposal for the party to be presented to the class as a whole. After working in the small groups, the class reconvened and each group presented its proposal. The whole class then made a joint decision on the party. The purpose of the exercise was to give the learners an opportunity to use language they had observed and practiced in a real and pleasurable communication situation. The exercise also provided a context for the use of speech behavior that the learners had not observed or practiced yet but which they would be learning in the near future. In the course of their discussion the learners came to realize that they needed to know how to disagree politely and suggest an alternative, for example, speech acts they had not practiced yet, as well as how to ask for and give an opinion, or make a suggestion, speech acts they had observed and practiced. By establishing the need to know in this way, the learners were prepared somewhat for the lessons to follow.

During the exercises I adopted the role of observer and recorder of the learners' communicative performance. I recorded the learners by tape recorder, having found through experimenting that recording these particular roleplays on videotape was difficult, and made notes on visual data such as gestures, facial expressions and body posture. In observing the learners and noting their performance I was most interested in positive aspects of their communication and egregious errors that affected communi-

cation; I was less interested in errors of expression and grammar unless they seriously affected the flow of communication. I recorded and took notes on the learners' communicative efforts in preparation for the upcoming Evaluation Stage.

The Evaluation Stage

In the Evaluation Stage we again, as in the first demonstration lesson, evaluated the learning process in a class discussion, the difference being that in this case I had a tape recording of the learners' communicative efforts in the Use Stage. I began the discussion with general remarks based on my observation of the learners during the roleplays. I complimented the learners as a group and also individuals on their performances in the roleplays. Then we listened to the tape recording after I had told the learners that I would stop the tape at major errors and the person who had made the error would have a chance to correct his mistake. I taught the learners the meaning and function of "I could have said '...'" and "I should have said '...'" and urged them to use these patterns when correcting their errors. This worked quite well for the learners soon became adept at using these past hypothetical forms and transferred this knowledge into their everyday speech behavior. If the individual who had made the error could not correct it himself, other learners then tried to make the correction using, "I think he could/should have said '....'" If noone in the class could recognize

and correct the error, I tried to direct the learners' attention to the mistake by asking questions. In deciding which errors merited stopping the tape to go through the correction process, I used the criteria of importance to effective communication and time availability. If we were not pressed for time, I tended to stop to examine even the smallest grammatical error. Usually, however, I was selective in stopping the tape. In follow-up discussions, many learners indicated that my comments in the tape correction phase on the appropriateness of their expression, verbal and physical, that is, contrasting what they had said and done with what native speakers would have have said and done, were most interesting to them.

In addition to examining errors, the would have's, should have's and could have's, I took pains to note improvement in the learners' communicating skills and relate what they said and did in the Use Stage to what they had observed and practiced in the previous stages. We followed our examination of the tape of the roleplays with a general discussion in which I solicited the learners' comments on the four stages of the learning process including the evaluation we were engaged in at that moment. The learners' comments were usually very constructive and, in this way, both they and I were able to gauge how effective the learning in that Exposure-Practice-Use-Evaluation cycle had been. As a result of evaluating our efforts in this manner, the learners and I were able to make any adjustments needed to enhance learning in upcoming cycles.

DEMONSTRATION LESSON III

The Exposure Stage

The learners' initial exposure to authentic material in context in the third demonstration lesson occurred in a different setting than in the other two demonstration lessons. We went to the language laboratory where each learner sat in a booth with individual sets of headphones. On a videotape recorder with sound channelled through the laboratory console and with the television monitor placed in a position in which all the learners could view the film I played the following scene from The Bellcrest Story as the learners recorded the soundtrack on individual cassette tapes in their booths.

The Bellcrest Story, Episode 2, Scene 5

Participants: Paul Malone, Maurice Downes, Charles Spence, Bellcrest's Secretary-Treasurer.

Setting: Maurice Downes's office.

Topic: Paul Malone's idea to revive the SC1, a controversial development project. At the beginning of the scene Maurice Downes is reading a report submitted by Malone on this topic.

Style: Formal.

Malone: ...As you can see, I think the SC1 is well worth consideration. Serious consideration.

Downes: Oh, your proposal will receive serious consideration. Don't assume that I'm against it--even though it was Donald William's pet scheme. But before we go any further, I think we should have Charles Spence in on this discussion.

Buzz (Downes buzzes Spence on the intercom)

Spence: Spence here.

Downes: Charles, can you come in here a moment? I've got Paul Malone with me. We're discussing the question of a development project to interest Ashburnham's. (Bellcrest's bank)

Spence: I'll come directly.

Malone: Wouldn't it be better to let Charles read my paper first?

Downes: I'd like to get a quick reaction from him.

Knock

Come in.

Malone: Afternoon,Charles.

Spence: Good afternoon, Paul.

Downes: Paul wants to bring back the SC1 and give it priority over other development projects.

Spence: (Shocked) Revive the SC1? Donald Williams's project? But it was abandoned!

Malone: It was suspended, not abandoned, Charles.

Spence: The money was wasted. Nothing was achieved.

Malone: With all due respect, Bellcrest didn't waste the money. The Company conceived, designed, and half-developed a product with considerable potential. I'm suggesting we put the money we've spent to good use.

Spence: Further development would require even more money. And it would be wasted, I'm warning you. Even if the thing worked, it might never show a profit. And it would strain our production resources. I admit the SC1 may be a fine technical achievement, but you've taught us that technical achievements alone do not improve profits.

Downes: Oh, I'm sure Paul will agree that they don't improve profits by themselves.

Malone: That's right. And, as Marketing Manager, it's my job to see that Bellcrest develops and produces what it can sell at a profit. Read my paper, Charles, I'll answer any questions you want about it. And I'm not asking for money immediately. I have enough money in my development budget for a market study. That should tell us whether we're justified in putting more money into the SC1.

Spence: Very well, I'll read it. But I'm very doubtful about this idea, Paul. Very doubtful....

After the learners listened to and recorded the scene, I handed them a copy of a typed transcript of the scene with about 40 percent of the scene deleted, each deleted word indicated by an underlined blank space. The learners' assignment was to fill in the blank spaces by listening to their individual tapes. The learners worked on this exercise for about 50 minutes after which we had a break and returned to our classroom. In the next period I handed out the following list of questions on the scene. In this exercise the learners worked in pairs and threes referring to their individual transcripts to attempt to answer the questions jointly. I had two tape recorders and tapes of the scene available so that the small groups could consult the soundtrack if there was disagreement in their individual transcripts. The questions they worked on together were:

Questions--Episode 2, Scene 5

1. Why did Malone say he thought the SC1 was worth serious consideration?
2. What word did Downes emphasize when he responded to Malone?
3. How do you interpret the tone of his voice?
4. Why didn't Malone think Downes would give the SC1 serious consideration?
5. How did Downes make a suggestion?
6. Why do you think he wanted Spence in on the discussion?
7. How did Downes ask Spence to come in?
8. How did Spence reply?
9. What did Malone say then? Why?
10. Did Downes agree with Malone's counter-suggestion? What did he say?
11. What did Spence say when he heard Malone's idea?
12. Why do you think his voice sounded like that?
13. Did Malone agree that the SC1 had been abandoned?
14. Why do you think Malone used the phrase: "With all due respect..."?
15. Why did Malone say "Bellcrest didn't waste the money" instead of "The money wasn't wasted"? (Compared to Spence)
16. How did Malone explain his idea?
17. What were Spence's three objections to Malone's idea?
18. Why did Spence use would?
19. Why did Spence say "Even if the thing worked..."? What did he mean to imply?
20. Was Spence sure the SC1 would never show a profit? How do you know?
21. How did Spence make an admission?
22. Was it a strong or weak admission? Why?

23. What was Downes doing by saying "Oh, I'm sure Paul..."?

24. What words did Downes stress? What do you understand the stress to mean?

25. Did Malone agree? What did he say?

26. What words did Malone then stress? Why?

27. Was Malone's suggestion to Charles Spence strong or weak? Why?

28. How did Malone try to reassure Spence, that is, speak to Spence's primary concern?

29. Was Malone a hundred percent sure the market study would help?

30. What did he say exactly and what do you understand this to mean?

31. How did Spence agree to Malone's suggestion?

32. Was Spence's agreement enthusiastic? How do you know?

33. Did Malone convince Spence about the SC1? Why do you think so?

It took 50 minutes or more for the learners to work through the question sheets, and even then they were usually not able to answer all of the questions. During this exercise I walked around the class and spent a few minutes looking over the shoulder of each learner. This gave me a chance to see what the learners had been able to comprehend on their own in the language laboratory as well as what they were doing at that moment. I responded to questions and requests for help if the learners needed assistance in understanding the scene or answering the questions. After the small-group exercise with the question sheets, we came together as a whole class and I asked individual learners to fill in underlined blanks on a transcript like the one they worked with in the language lab written on a large piece

of easel-board paper. We dealt with any questions the learners had on grammar, usage, or the function and meaning of particular utterances consulting the videotape on difficult points in the same manner that I have described in the other demonstration lessons. At the end of this exercise we had a completed transcript of the scene. We then worked through the questions as a group with the learners taking turns asking and answering the questions. This final phase of the Exposure Stage helped the learners check and correct what they had done in the language lab and in their small groups.

As the reader can see, we covered the same ground in the Exposure Stage of this lesson as in previous Exposure stages, but in a slightly different manner. The learners began by focusing on the form of the observed speech behavior, that is, exactly what the characters said in the scene, proceeding to the task of gaining a more complete understanding of the function and meaning of the characters' utterances. The learners worked individually , then in small groups, and finally as a whole class gaining a greater understanding in each phase through re-examining their original understanding of the scene in the light of their fellow learners' understanding. It usually took about three or more class hours to complete the activities described here, but, even if we needed more time, we did not go on to the Practice Stage until each learner had as complete an understanding of the scene as he could.

The Practice Stage

The practice in the third demonstration lesson occurred in the context of intensive training in previous Practice Stages connected with scenes from Episode 2 the learners had undergone in various speech acts concerned with discussing a project and making a decision on what to do. The learners had been observing Paul Malone and the other Bellcrest managers doing just that throughout Episode 2. The speech acts the learners had practiced prior to this stage included expressing and asking for an opinion, making suggestions, both tentative and positive, agreeing and disagreeing with someone's opinion, talking about the pros and cons of doing something, or the disadvantages and advantages of something, among others. To a large extent, the practice in the third demonstration lesson built and expanded upon previous practice in formulas used in (business) discussion.

I began the practice by reviewing on the film Charles Spence's reaction when Maurice Downes told him that Paul Malone was thinking of reviving the SCl. During the Exposure Stage we had determined through considering questions 11 and 12 that the tone of Spence's voice as he said, "Revive the SCl?" conveyed shock, disbelief that Malone would even consider such a move and his categorically negative reaction to the idea. After reviewing that piece of the scene, I asked one learner to approach another learner with a suggestion using one of the patterns we had practiced previously, for example, "I think we should...." The second learner then tried to

imitate Spence's questioning, doubtful, negative tone of voice by repeating the verb phrase following "...should...." This resulted in an exchange like: A: "I think we should go to McDonald's." B: "Go to McDonald's?" I then had the learners brainstorm for a few minutes on hypothetical objections to doing something using would. We had covered this pattern and usage in a previous lesson and had reconsidered it in the Exposure Stage of this lesson through analyzing Spence's "Further development would require even more money...," etc. in questions 17 and 18. The short list of objections the learners produced (with my assistance) included: "That would cost too much" or, "That would be too expensive," and "That would take too long," and "That would be a waste of...." The learners then practiced in pairs a short, two-line dialogue: A: "I think we should go to McDonald's, (for example) B: Go to McDonald's? That would cost too much!" This example from the learners' mouths had reality as communication because visiting McDonald's in Japan is two to three times as expensive as in the United States. Nevertheless, McDonald's and other American-style fast food places are very popular with younger Japanese.

The second phase of the Practice Stage consisted of a conversational drill I adapted from English for Business based on the exchange between Downes and Malone: Downes: "I think we should have Charles Spence in on this...." Malone: "... wouldn't it be better to let Charles read my paper first?" The learners had considered the communicative function of this interaction in the Exposure Stage through questions 5, 6, and 9 (also, 10).

The learners understood that Malone in saying "... wouldn't it be better to..." is disagreeing with Downes's suggestion and making a counter-suggestion at the same time. The conversational drill was designed to practice not only suggestion and counter-suggestion but also sequencing in these patterns: a) do X first and then do Y, b) do X now and Y later, c) do X before Y, d) do Y after X, e) don't do Y until (we do) X. We went over these different ways of sequencing actions before beginning the drill because the success of the drill depended in large measure on the learners' facile handling of these patterns. Still another facet of the drill was that it introduced more polite ways of indicating disagreement in addition to making an alternative suggestion.

The sheet I handed the learners immediately prior to the drill looked like this:

Remember this exchange between Maurice Downes and Paul Malone?

Downes: I think we should have Charles Spence in on this discussion.

(A while later)

Malone: Wouldn't it be better to let Charles read my paper first?

Practice making suggestions and counter-suggestions in the same way using these alternative courses of action!

look at the projects we're working on/review the suspended projects

(...first...then)

Example: A: I think we should look at the projects we're working on first and then review the suspended projects.

B: Wouldn't it be better to review the suspended projects first?

Now you try it!

do a market study/select a project (...before....)

make a proposal/discuss it in Management Committee (...after...)

consider arguments for.../arguments against... (...not...until...)

move into the industrial vehicle field/car industry (...now...later)

redesign the SC1/work out the costs (...before...)

A more polite way to make an alternative suggestion would be to begin with a phrase like:

EXCUSE ME, BUT wouldn't it be better to....

or,

FORGIVE ME, BUT wouldn't it be better to...

or,

YOU MAY HAVE A POINT, BUT wouldn't it be better to...

Now try using these phrases before your counter-suggestions!

After going over the formulaic patterns and the example, I asked two learners to try the first two-line dialogue with alternative actions. If they did it perfectly the first time, I then asked two other learners to try the second set of alternatives and so on. If the learners made errors in the exchange, their fellow learners helped them correct the errors. In this manner, in the class as a whole we worked through each set of alternative courses of action. As the reader can see, these sets of alter-

natives were based on the language and plot of The Bellcrest Story and thus were familiar to the learners. After working through the alternatives as a class, the learners then split into pairs to continue practicing. When they had worked with the drill on their own for a while, I called their attention to the polite phrases with which they could preface their counter-suggestions. The learners then continued practicing with B using the polite phrase in response to A's opening suggestion. I also recommended that they vary their practice by using different opinion-suggestion patterns they knew, by using sequencing patterns other than the one attached to each set of alternatives of the drill sheet, and by changing the alternatives from the sequence on the drill sheet. For example, A in the example set, instead of saying "I think we should look at the projects we're working on first and then the suspended projects," might say "In my opinion, we should review the projects we're working on after we review the suspended projects." B might then respond "Wouldn't it be better to review the projects we're working on first?" As the reader can surmise, B had to listen carefully to how A sequenced the alternative course of action in order to make an appropriate counter-suggestion.

When the learners had exhausted the possibilities of the drill sheet, I suggested that they put the sheets away and try making suggestions and counter-suggestions of their own. I also pointed out at this time that, in a real communication situation like the one in the drill, A is required by the situation to respond to B's alternative suggestion in some way.

I suggested that in their practice they carry on the conversation in a way that felt natural to them and somehow resolve the disagreement implied by the suggestion and counter-suggestion. This proved to be a very effective exercise in generating near-native communication through the learners using patterns they had observed and practiced previously and following their natural tendency (as Japanese) to resolve disputes to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. After the B person of the pair had made a counter-suggestion, the A person would either say, "I see what you mean," a phrase learned earlier in Episode 2, or ask B to explain his reasoning, "Why do you think so?" If A used the former, then either A or B would resolve the disagreement then and there, "O.K., let's...." If A used the latter, then B would explain, A, in turn, would either agree or disagree, and eventually they would resolve their disagreement. Communication like this, growing out of a structured drill, was fascinating and gratifying for me, as a teacher, to observe. In later discussions, the learners and I agreed that this exercise, progressing from a tightly structured drill to less structured practice, was extremely fruitful in building their ability to participate effectively in a discussion in English.

The third phase of the Practice Stage built on a drill done in the lesson immediately preceding this lesson which focused on stating a specific problem using the formula, "As I see it, the thing we've got to consider is [when / where / how] to do...." I modified this pattern slightly to "As I see it (or some other phrase expressing opinion) we've got to find out [how much it / when we'll / where we]

will cost to..."
be able to..." These patterns then became an opening statement that
can..."
generated a response using the pattern(s) "Well, let's / why don't we ask someone.. / do a market / do some
to... ,
study..., that should tell us how much..." / when... " / where... " or simply, "that should tell
research,
us what we need to know." After I had modeled these patterns and the learners practiced two at a time in the whole class group, the learners again split into pairs taking a different partner than they had had in the second phase practice. The dialogue sequence then was A stating his view of what they needed to know followed by B's positive suggestion and expression of expectant probability with should. The phrase with should was based on Malone's "...that should tell us whether..." in Scene 5, which the learners had analyzed in the Exposure Stage through questions 21, 22 and 23. In the practice dialogue I left the statement and response open-ended so that the learners would have to fill in with language of their own. I encouraged them in their paired practice to continue the dialogue in a natural way similar to what they had done in the previous drill in phase two. Frequently, A responded to B's suggestion and expression of expectant probability with a hypothetical objection or an alternative suggestion, starting another cycle of give and take along familiar lines. Occasionally, however, A agreed with B's suggestion, "I agree with you...," and resolved the dialogue by restating what B had said, "...so let's...as you suggested."

In all these Practice Stage activities the reader will have noted a technique that we have observed before in the Practice Stage of the second deonstration lesson, pages 38-39 above. In each exercise the learners had to listen carefully to each other in order to respond appropriately to their partners in paired practice. The exercises required the learners

to repeat, restate, or rephrase what their partners had just said as an integral part of the speech acts being practiced. The technique embodied in these communication exercises owes its origin to "Rogerian Listening," a values clarification exercise that aims to enable learners to listen effectively.[1] The learners commented at length on these exercises in our Evaluation Stage discussion finding them to be challenging and useful, a new experience in learning language.

The Use Stage

The main activity in the Use Stage of this lesson was a roleplay adapted from English for Business and based on the plot of The Bellcrest Story. English for Business contains one suggested roleplay for each episode of The Bellcrest Story, thirteen in all. The roleplay situation I will describe is the one presented in the text in chapter three, corresponding to episode three of the film. The situation centers on a meeting in which the Bellcrest management discuss Paul Malone's proposal to bring back the SC1, a controversial development project, and make it the hub of Bellcrest's expansion and development effort. In actuality, the first scene of Episode 3 is this management meeting, but the learners in my classes had not viewed this scene before doing the roleplay. I preferred the learners doing the roleplay prior to viewing the same situation on the film, in contrast to the procedure recommended in English for Business, so that they could create their own discussion, make their own decision, rather than try to recreate the discussion and decision on the film.

In setting up the roleplay in class I handed out a description of the situation and an individual role description to each learner the night before they were to do the roleplay. I advised the learners to review what they had learned about Bellcrest and its situation from the film and books and asked them not to discuss their roles with each other. The situation and role descriptions (only one role description per learner) they received were as follows:

Statement of the Problem

Paul Malone has submitted his proposal to revive the SC1, and, as a result, Maurice Downes has decided to call a meeting of all the managers concerned to reach a formal decision as to whether to proceed with the SC1 or not. The problem the management will decide is whether to submit the SC1 to the Board of Directors as a priority for new product development. At this meeting the management must take into account possible alternatives to the SC1, potential markets both at home and abroad, the Board's possible reaction to the proposal, the expense involved and the existence of competition. The SC1 also raises questions of company policy such as whether Bellcrest should stick to its present field of operations or move outside this field to open up new ranges of products.

Description of your role

Maurice Downes--You are the chairman of the meeting and should therefore guide the discussion towards a decision while letting everybody have their say. You are not willing to give your opinion on the SC1 project until you have heard everybody's views. As chairman you are responsible for organizing the meeting and should summarize it at the end.

Paul Malone--Your purpose at the meeting is to get the support of those present for the SC1 project. You must fight for the SC1 all the way against any opposition. You should, therefore, prepare as many arguments as possible in favor of your project.

Charles Spence--You are very much against the SC1 and are determined to stop the project. You should therefore prepare as many arguments as possible against the SC1.

Tom Driver--You are neutral as far as the SC1 is concerned. You should be ready to be convinced either way. You should be prepared to answer questions about Bellcrest's ability to produce the SC1 and should invent such statistics as you feel necessary to do this.

Bob Orpenshaw--You are naturally in favor of the SC1 and cannot understand anyone being against it. You are rude to anyone who opposes the project, and you hate Charles Spence. You should be prepared to elaborate on what a brilliant technical achievement the SC1 is.

Dennis Evans--You are very anxious to say the right thing, and agree with whatever Downes says. Privately you are in favor of the SC1, particularly as your salesmen have indicated that they have heard that potential customers would be interested in such a device.

William Jenkins--You are head of the Overseas Sales Department. You are very interested in the SC1 because your contacts in Europe have indicated that there is a need for such a device. You are cautious about committing yourself to the SC1 too quickly, but are quite ready to be convinced by good arguments.

David Smithson--You are the Personnel Manager. As far as the SC1 is concerned you have an open mind. You are worried, however, about the possible consequences of introducing a new product, as you feel this may involve additional training of employees and you don't have the money in your budget to do this. You should therefore question Malone carefully about whether additional training either of salesmen or of men on the shop floor will be necessary.

If there were more than eight learners in the class, I had additional roles, specifically assistants to Downes, Malone and Spence sharing their views and function in the discussion, ready to hand out. If there were less than eight learners, I left that number of roles out starting with David Smithson and working my way backward through the list. In assigning roles to the learners I tried to match personality, communicating style and work experience of the learner to the Bellcrest manager they were

going to play. Occasionally, I assigned, with mixed results, a role demanding a verbal presence, such as that of Paul Malone, to a reticent learner hoping that the situation, the "necessity" of being Paul Malone, would draw the learner out. Alternatively, I let the learners choose their own roles, with good results, or folded the individual roles and let the learners choose a role at random. This last practice had mixed results also. In retrospect, I would say that the best results occurred when the learners chose their own roles or when I tried to match the personalities and jobs of the learners to the personalities and jobs of the Bellcrest managers.

On the day of the roleplay I set up desks and chairs in a semi-circle corresponding to the number of learners. Maurice Downes, as the Managing Director and leader of themeeting, sat in the middle of the semi-circle. The other managers found their own places. I set up a videotape camera and recorder about fifteen to twenty feet away from the semi-circle with a microphone placed in a central position and the camera placed so that it could swivel and view each learner's face. The roleplay began as the learners entered the room, as I filmed everything they said and did from their entrance to the end of the meeting. The learners knew that the videotape of the roleplay would be the medium of review and evaluation in the Evaluation Stage.

The Evaluation Stage

We approached the Evaluation Stage in this lesson in much the same manner as described in the second demonstration lesson. Thus we had a videotape of the roleplay instead of just an audio tape. This factor made quite a difference, it seemed to me, in the learners' consciousness of themselves as speakers of another language. There they were in front of their own eyes, Japanese all, speaking English! Universally, they thought their performances in the roleplay to have been atrocious. I interpreted this reaction in two ways. There was a certain amount of embarrassment and modesty at having made mistakes involved intheir reaction, and, also, I think it was very difficult for them to identify with their selves visible on the videotape. This was one of the great benefits of taping with the videotape recorder, I believe, that the learners could see themselves communicating in a language other than their own and gradually come to accept the reality of themselves as speakers of English. I perceived it as part of my job in this stage to guide them to this realization as well as give them a pep talk to the effect that their performances in the roleplay were not atrocious--which was true.

In correcting the learners' errors we worked through the videotape of the roleplay stopping at mistakes that seriously affected communication. The learners tried to correct their own errors with help from

their peers and me if needed. I was much more selective about which errors I stopped for in this lesson because the roleplay was much longer that the two situations I had recorded in the second demonstration lesson. I supplemented this class error correction exercise by later going over the videotape myself and noting all the mistakes, what the learners had said, what they should have said, and the kinds of errors they made. I then typed this information, made copies and distributed them to all the learners. These sheets were appreciated by both the learners as a ready reference on what and what not to say and by colleagues doing research on errors made by Japanese language learners.

After completing our review of the videotape, we had our concluding discussion with the learners commenting on their experiences in this cycle and asking questions. In the course of our discussion I brought up two points that I asked the learners to consider and comment on. The first concerned the interchangeability and elasticity of the patterns we had studied in practice related to the scenes of Episode 2. For example, earlier in Episode 2 we had observed and practiced a pattern for making a tentative suggestion, "It might be a good idea to...." I asked the learners how they would combine this pattern with the counter-suggestion pattern we had practiced in this lesson to make a tentative counter-suggestion. I was thinking of "It might be (a) better (idea) to ...," and the learners were generally able to think of this pattern on their own.

In this way the learners had a good mini-lesson in creative phrase-building. The second point I brought up concerned the relationship of the learning that had taken place to the class goals set at the beginning of the term. In general, the learners had nothing but positive things to say along these lines because,as the reader has seen, the practice and learning that occurred after observing authentic communication in The Bellcrest Story was for the purpose of discussing something and reaching a decision, one of the learners' major learning goals in English. At this point I think we all realized that we had participated in a unique learning experience. The relationship between working with the film of The Bellcrest Story and learning how to communicate was becoming clearer, and we all looked forward with anticipation to finding out how the Bellcrest management really resolved the question of whether the SCl was a suitable project for Bellcrest's attempt to expand and diversify.

ANALYZING THE LEARNING PROCESS

In analyzing the Learning process to find out how the learners learned we can outline the activities of the four stages in this way:

Exposure Stage

Exposure to authentic material in context.

Intensive work on comprehension: goal—100% understanding.

Sociolinguistic exploration in appropriateness of use, style, body language, paralanguage.

Optional grammatical analysis and/or explanation.

Practice Stage

Focus on and practice of selected speech acts observed in the Exposure Stage; the main criteria for selection: relevance to learning objectives and communicative usefulness

Use Stage

Communication through roleplaying, or other opportunity to use speech behavior observed in Exposure Stage and practiced in Practice Stage, as well as from previous learning cycles.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluation of communication in Use Stage, of learning in the four stages through discussion.

Error correction.

The main activity of the Exposure Stage was the learners trying to comprehend native speakers speaking through the medium of videotape film and/or its soundtrack. Whether this intensive work in comprehension

took place with me operating the videotape recorder in front of the learners, or the learners working in small groups with tape recorders and tapes of the soundtrack, or individually in the language laboratory, it was a case of theme and variation; the learners worked at the task of understanding native speech in context. The task was difficult at best, yet it became easier for the learners as time passed. There were several factors involved in this gradual improvement. First, I think the learners' ability to comprehend improved steadily through the four-week term. Their listening and interpretive skills sharpened through practice and training and their considerable passive knowledge gained from six years of grammar-translation in junior and senior high school came to the surface to help them. Also, the material played a large role in making their task easier as we went along. The Bellcrest Story provided a familiar story with familiar characters and plot, a continuing context for learning language that was both interesting and entertaining for the learners.

But how did learning actually occur in the Exposure Stage? I think the answer to this question lies in what we did in the Exposure Stage. First, we looked at a whole, an entire scene, and then we broke the whole into pieces, lines or phrases or words, for the purpose of understanding. In other words, we analyzed a whole scene (that was part of a part of a larger whole) line by line, or word by word, and sometimes, in the case of difficult words, sound by sound.

Otto Jespersen, the noted Danish linguist, described the process of language in this way:[2]

Speaker: Notion → Function → Form
Writer:

Listener:
Reader: Form → Function → Notion

The producer, a speaker or writer, wants to mean, a notion, for a reason, the function, so he chooses and uses a particular form. The receiver, a listener or reader, perceives a form, performing a function, which means. In the Exposure Stage the learners began their task of comprehending by focusing on the form of the language they were observing, that is, exactly what the characters on the film were saying. Almost immediately after focusing on the form, the learners concentrated on discerning the function and meaning of the form. Thus, by focusing their receptive and interpretive "equipment," their ears, eyes, minds and hearts, first on what native speakers said, and then on what the speakers were doing through their speech, and what they meant by their speech, the learners conjoined the process of language and the process of learning.

Another facet of the learning in the Exposure Stage, which I did not touch upon in detail in the demonstration lessons, was sociolinguistic exploration. The learners became increasingly adept at interpreting English body language because I regularly turned the film's sound off as it played and then helped them analyze and interpret the silent language they saw, the meaning expressed through the characters' facial expressions, gestures,

and body posture when speaking. Further, the learners came to realize that the personalities of the characters, their position in the Bellcrest management structure, as well as their personal feelings about whatever they were discussing determined to a large extent the patterns of speech and tone of voice they used. Thus, for example, the learners could see that Bob Orpenshaw's bluntness, his disinterest in and disregard for financial considerations as head of Research and Development, plus his almost fanatic support for the SC1 manifested in the direct and often impolite way he spoke. These observations illustrate a point I have made before that the availability of the videotaped material and the equipment to play it on was a great boon to the learners because they were able to see the characters as they spoke. With only audio tapes we could still have investigated paralinguistic meaning, meaning expressed through the tone of the voice. With the added video dimension, however, the whole range of meaning including kinesic meaning expressed through the body was available for the learners' exploration.

Another, more familiar part of the learning in the Exposure Stage was grammatical analysis. In the case of hypothetical would, for example, after observing Maurice Downes or Charles Spence say something like, "The SC1 would cost too much...," the learners' typical response to my question, "What is the meaning expressed by the would here?," was "would is the past form of will." I then asked the learners what the difference was between "The SC1 would cost too much" and "The SC1 will cost too much."

The learners could only rarely begin to answer such a question. As a result, I usually felt the need to say something in response to their "explanation" of would. I explained that although it was possible to describe would as "the past form of will", this description had little relevance to the meaning expressed through would by Downes and Spence. I mentioned in passing that the word remote,[3] indicating separation from the speaker's immediate reality, is a more accurate and meaningful descriptive term for would's form than past. We then returned to the videotape and attempted to answer my question on the meaning expressed through would by considering the utterance in context in the manner described above. The point here is that I did not reject the learners' form-based description from their previous learning, but, rather, tried to use their surface understanding as a base on which to build a deeper awareness of the function and meaning of language in communication. Similarly, I did not reject their desire for grammatical analysis and explanation, but tried to respond as best I could in the context of our class objectives. Although this practice lengthened the learning cycle somewhat, I felt it resulted in a more positive attitude on the learners' part towards the approach to learning communication skills we were using as well as a revitalization of their passive knowledge of English.

Mentioning the learners' desire for grammatical analysis and explantion brings up another factor in the learning process that I have not had occasion to discuss before. The standard Japanese mode of learning involves

authoritarian teaching and rote learning. The effect this has had on language learning in Japan is twofold. First, Japanese, in general, do not speak other languages, but can talk about them at great length in their own language. Secondly, when they enter language learning situations after their formal secondary and collegiate training, the Japanese bring expectations and preconceptions with them that often impede their learning. In the case of the learning process in my class(es), this was certainly a factor though fortunately minimized by the nature of the activities we did in each stage and the quality of the material we used.

The approach that we used in our class as well as my unwillingness to be a dictionary, encyclopedia, grammar book or strong authoritarian figure met with initial reluctance from the learners. When the learners had become accustomed to working with the videotaped material and the activities in the stages, and saw the results in their own communicative competence, however, they participated enthusiastically and diligently in the learning process. I attribute this positive reponse to the approach in large measure to the group- and task-oriented activities that comprised a large proportion of the activities in the four stages of the learning process. Japanese society is group- and task-oriented and, therefore, the learners, as experienced and highly qualified members of that society, reacted positively to the small-group tasks exemplified in all stages in the demonstration lessons. In addition, the Bellcrest materials in conjunction with the approach we used had many aspects in common with the case-study approach to learning, the standard mode of business education

in Japan, a mode familiar to the learners in my class(es).

The learning in the Practice Stage also contained elements of familiarity for Japanese learners. Repetition is of primary importance in training in Japan, whether the training is in flower arranging, kárate, or writing one of the three alphabet-character systems in use. The repetition in these cases, as in the Practice Stage activities in our class, is not repetition for its own sake, but repetition to breed intimacy, to build the bridge between mind and body, spirit and body, idea and action. In the Practice Stage in our learning cycle we engaged in a training of the mouth to perform acts of communication. This training was meaningful and enhanced meaning at the same time. When the learners saw a Bellcrest person on the film agree using a certain pattern and then practiced this pattern in a dialogue in small groups, for example, they were moving from a basic understanding of the function of a piece of language in their mind to a utilization of this understanding in actual communication. By using this pattern to agree with a person talking to them in the Practice Stage, and by using it repeatedly, they were deepening their understanding of the function and meaning of that pattern. Ideally, this practice made that pattern part of the learners' active, communicative ability in English. If this happened, the pattern would probably appear in the following Use Stage; if not, its absence might be noted in the Evaluation Stage. Whether or not the learners actually "learned" the speech act while practicing, that is, internalized it, made it their

own, they trod the next step on the path to learning by verbalizing, training their mouths to say, language they had analyzed and reached a certain understanding of in the Exposure Stage.

The learning in the Use Stage was a direct extension of the learning in the Practice Stage, a less structured opportunity to "practice" and use comprehended utterances in their own communication. The reader might question whether it was their "own," whether they had not had words put into their mouths in the Practice Stage, and ideas into their heads in preparation for the roleplays, whether in pretending to be someone else the words emanating from their mouths could ever be their "own." These questions would never--and did not, in my experience--occur to Japanese learners, however, any more than it would occur to them to question whether observing a master of flower arranging perform his art, then practicing the skills observed in the master, and finally trying to emulate the master by making their own arrangement with flowers and equipment provided by the master, is, in fact, learning flower arranging. The function of the Use Stage activities then in the process of learning was to give the learners a chance to communicate on their own. It was a "test" of accumulated knowledge and learning, and, at the same time, a learning experience itself.

The Evaluation Stage activities served as a review and recapitulation of the learning process, a formalized reflection period to cap the many

instances of informal reflection that (might have) occurred in the other stages of the cycle. In many cases the learners did not actually "learn" what we had observed and practiced until the Evaluation Stage when they came to a realization of the significance of errors made or opportunities missed in the Use Stage. In some cases, I must admit, the learners did not "learn" what they had observed and practiced while we were together. Perhaps they internalized the language after leaving LIOJ, I do not know. I base these observations on the point when "learning" occurred in different cases on my subsequent observation of these learners as communicators. Whether "learning" had occurred or not, however, the review and reflection in the Evaluation Stage strengthened and supported the learning activities in the other stages of the process.

In general, I considered it important for all concerned to approach the Evaluation Stage as a learning exercise in itself. As a result, we learned several important lessons. The learners came to realize that making mistakes is a natural and common occurrence in learning a language and that it should not be a cause for embarrassment. Further, the learners became aware that making mistakes is an intrinsic part of learning, that studying one's mistakes is an excellent way to learn. Underlying these lessons was the realization that <u>trying</u> to communicate, not being deterred by the mistakes that will and must occur, is the first step in learning how to communicate. For Japanese learners of English, whose cultural reluctance to making personal errors of any kind severely im-

peded their will to communicate, these were important lessons indeed. In conclusion, the key to the function of the Evaluation Stage in the learning process was the consciousness the learners almost always attained of what exactly had happened in the learning process. It was our opportunity to reflect on what we had done and learned.

To summarize this analysis of the learning process, the function of the Exposure Stage was to analyze authentic speech in context for the purpose of understanding; of the Practice Stage to focus on communication skills, speech acts, observed in the Exposure Stage and train the mouth to produce speech patterns expressing these communicative acts; of the Use Stage to provide an opportunity for the integration and use of previous learning in a communication activity; and, of the Evaluation Stage to review and reflect on the learning in the four stages. An implication of our analysis of the activities in each stage, suggested by both Jespersen's description of the process of language noted above and Alvino Fantini's description of what he calls the Process Approach[4] to teaching and learning language, is that the learners were learning not only communication skills, but also the process of learning how to communicate. This hypothesis implies that by analyzing a conversation line by line in the Exposure Stage, the learners were learning both the form-function-meaning of authentic speech material and how to analyze. Similarly, in the Practice Stage, the learners practiced communication skills and how to practice communication skills. In the Use and Evaluation Stages, the learners learned language by using and evaluating, and, at the same time,

practiced how to use and evaluate in language learning.

How can we be certain that the learners learned both how to communicate and how to learn how to communicate? There is no way for me to be absolutely certain that the learners in my classes learned both process and language. There were indications, however, when we worked together that they were, in fact, learning process. Take the exercise described in the first phase of the Exposure Stage in the third demonstration lesson, for example. The learners worked by themselves in a language laboratory booth trying to fill in underlined blank spaces in a transcript of a scene from The Bellcrest Story. How well the individual learners did on this exercise told me how much of the scene they had understood, how well they could receive and interpret authentic speech, and, by comparison with their previous efforts, how well they had learned how to analyze. Another example will further illustrate the learners' learning of process.

I once went through a tooth-pulling exercise in process with the learners that paid unexpected dividends through the rest of the term. In the Exposure Stage we came upon a contraction with I and the learners could not comprehend or guess from the context what the sound following I was. I asked them to consider how many sounds could possibly follow I in a contraction. We then went through a laborious process of thinking and guessing that resulted in the learners eventually coming up with the finite list of four sounds that can follow I in a contraction in standard

modern English, /m/, /l/, /v/, and /d/ (arrived at in that order, by the way). We then considered what would follow each of these contractions, returned to the film, whereupon the learners were able to make an intelligent guess at the sound they had not been able to comprehend before. We had spent ten minutes and more trying to analyze one sound, albeit a sound conveying an important piece of form-function-meaning. The second time we met a contraction with I that the learners could not comprehend I thought we would have to go through the same procedure, but, to my surprise, at least one learner remembered the four possibilities whereupon we went immediately to the context of the contraction. Thus, the first step of the original analysis process had been eliminated. In successive meetings with the ubiquitous contractions of I one or more of the learners instantly factored in the first two steps of our original analysis and were able to comprehend or guess through context at the contraction after hearing it once. In my opinion, this anecdote indicates that the learners were not only learning language by analyzing authentic utterances in the Exposure Stage, but also how to anlayze language for comprehension; by continually going through the process of analysis the learners became better analysts. I do not mean to imply that good analysts of language are necessarily good communicators. The point here is that by learning how to analyze the language of native speakers the learners learned an important skill in understanding, the basis from which effective communication and effective learning of communication proceed.

If then the learners did learn process as well as language, how can

we know whether the learners ever used this learning after leaving that situation? In fact, I do not know. I can only assume that, having participated in a "successful" learning experience, the learners might attempt to repeat the process of learning they had experienced in future learning situations. In any case, it seems to me that the four stages I have delineated in the learning process occur in one form or another in all language learning situations including learning language on one's own. Even if the learners in my classes never made conscious use of what they had learned about process, and my final words to them concerned what they had learned about process and how they could use it to learn on their own, I am confident that in addition to being better communicators they were better language learners for having observed and analyzed, practiced, used, and evaluated--the process of learning.

PERSPECTIVE

There are two ways in which this paper can be put into a broader perspective. We can view it in relation to the continuing professional interest in teaching communicative competence and also in terms of the general applicability of the approach using authentic material to teaching other aspects of language, writing skills, for example.

I firmly believe that this approach is generally applicable to teaching other aspects of language. If I were going to teach a class of university students how to write a term paper, for example, I would begin by asking them to analyze a good example of a well-written term paper. They would consider what the writer did in preparation for writing and then how the writer actually went about writing the paper. In the Practice Stage, the learners would then practice the skills involved in writing term papers and eventually put these skills into use by writing a term paper themselves and then evaluating their efforts. In like manner, if the goals of a class included learning how to write a narrative description or business and personal letters, analyzing good examples of these items would be a logical first step in the learning process.

Concerning teaching communicative competence, the reader will no doubt be aware of the discussion of this topic in professional meetings and journals throughout the decade of the 70's. Since 1976, with the publica-

tion of David Wilkins's seminal Notional Syllabuses,[5] this discussion has centered on what has come to be called a functional-notional or notional-functional approach. Speaking personally, I have found a theoretical base for my own approach to language and teaching language in the work of Wilkins and other British linguists, such as M.A.K. Halliday and Geoffrey Leech, who focus on the semantic and functional aspects of language.

It is interesting to note that the learning situation providing the context for the demonstration lessons in this paper meets many of the criteria that Wilkins feels are optimal for the application of a notional syllabus. The course at LIOJ was intensive in nature, of short duration and for a special purpose, that is, business English. In addition, the natural focus on speech acts, such as, asking for and giving an opinion, making a suggestion, etc., in the approach described in this paper was clearly notional and functional. This is to say that the focus in the learning process was, as we have seen, primarily on the meaning and function of the language present in the authentic material. Whether the approach described herein qualifies as a practical application of Wilkins's theoretical construct or not, the fact remains that it was effective in accomplishing its purpose, the teaching and learning of oral communication skills. For this reason, it is well worth the serious consideration of those contemplating expansion and diversification in this field.

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NOTES

[1] Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum, Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students, (New York: Hart Publishing, 1972), Strategy No. 51, pp. 295-98.

[2] Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar, (1934; rpt. New York: Norcroft, 1969), pp. 56-57.

[3] Martin Joos, The English Verb (Form and Meanings), (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 149, for example.

[4] Alvino E. Fantini, "Focus on Process: An Examination of the Teaching and Learning of a Second Language," unpublished article, (1973).

[5] David A. Wilkins, Notional Syllabuses, (The Oxford University Press, 1976).

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